



In Iowa's Interest:

Creating Your Own Story at Your Library

by Senator Tom Harkin

Libraries have had an amazing impact on Iowa and our nation, providing a cultural center for communities and giving people a free place to learn and discover new things – no matter where they live. Every year at this time, we observe National Library Week – a time to celebrate the contributions of our nation's libraries and librarians. All types of libraries - school, public, academic and special – participate in this week and deserve this appreciation.

This year's theme for National Library Week is “create your own story @ your library.” Whether you are getting your first library card, opening a good book, learning useful computer skills or planning a trip, your local library is a place where your story can begin. I remember hours spent at the library as a child reading about different worlds and learning fascinating things. While many believe that technology has replaced the need for a library, this could not be further from the truth. In addition to free access to books and computers, libraries also provide homework help, employment assistance, accurate financial information, fun programs for kids of all ages, support for new Americans, CDs, DVDs and so much more. Additionally, Iowa's libraries have intelligent, helpful and dedicated librarians happy to assist you however they can.

Libraries are also helping millions of Americans create the story of the next chapter in their careers. Every day libraries are helping to level the playing field for job seekers by providing access to job databases and other online resources. Many libraries also provide adult education courses, job fairs and resume assistance. In these tough economic times, the library is a free resource that I encourage Iowans to use.

The library can also be about creating your own story and helping children foster a love of reading. Each week, I participate in a program called “Everybody Wins!” The organization's mission - one mentor, one child, one book at a time - is a testimony to the impact volunteers can have on a child's life. Many libraries and schools across the country offer a similar program. During National Library Week, I encourage everyone to read to the children in their lives and consider participating in a similar program in their community.

So this year, I encourage all Iowans to consider starting their own story – whatever that story may be – at a local library. For more information on libraries or to find the closest library to you, please visit www.atyourlibrary.org.